

Silver City Hotshots

Gila National Forest



The Silver City Hotshots started in 1977 on the South end of the Gila National Forest on the Silver City Ranger District. The Gila National Forest covers 3.3 million acres and is home to the Gila and the Aldo Leopold wilderness areas. The crew was started from scratch and became an IHC their first year. They are stationed 10 miles out of Silver City New Mexico at Fort Bayard which is a forest service work center serving the hotshot crew, two engine crews, livestock and facilities for the range department. The crew has been based out of there since their inception. The base started out as a shop/training room, the District Rangers house and a small trailer. After their first season the shop burned to the ground during the winter. The facilities now include one bunk house a singlewide trailer a 4000 square foot metal building housing the crew carriers, shop, workout room and working space for the crew. Another building houses the training room.

The first Superintendent was George Grijalva who ran the crew from 1977 to 1986. The crew was known for wearing the old Silver aluminum hardhats polished to a sheen, the "chrome domes". George and the crew discovered the logo for the Silver City Hotshots pinned on a wall in a gas station down in Hanover New Mexico. It was a picture of Smokey Bear running thru flames bearing shovel with his teeth bared. It came from a MAD magazine and was quickly adopted as the crew logo and has been the same logo with only minor touch up throughout the years, the shovel was changed to a Pulaski in the 80's and color was added in the 90's. From 1977 to 1986 the crew traveled to and from fires in 10 passenger vans, receiving crew buggies in 1986.

Ricky Sedillo was the superintendent half way through the 1986 fire season up until 1988 and was followed up by Kevin Joseph from 1988 until 1992, Kevin changed the crew t-shirt colors to grey during this time and the crew hardhats changed from the aluminum "chrome domes" to yellow plastic bullards for the crew and red for the superintendent and foreman.

Mick Guck was superintendent from 1992 until 1995 and was then followed by Dan Key from 1996 until 1999. During this time the hard hats were changed to blue and the crew shirt was changed to the navy blue color that the crew still wears today. Another fact during Dan Key's time as superintendent the Regional Office tried to get rid of the fighting bear logo and Dan went to bat for it at the Regional Office and we allowed to keep it. In light of Dan Key's efforts to keep the bear, the crew voted in 2011 to officially name the bear "Dan". Since its introduction to the crew from George Grijalva, the fighting bear has been our first and only mascot.

John Burfiend was the superintendent from 2000-2001 followed by Keith Matthes from 2002-2003. Mark Bernal was the acting superintendent during the 2004 season. In 2005 Mike Schinstock was detailed from the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest in Virginia for the season. The superintendent was filled permanently in the spring of 2006 with Cathleen Lowe who was the Crew Superintendent until 2010 by accepting a transfer to the Mt. Taylor IHC Superintendent position. Pedro "Pete" Valenzuela is currently the superintendent as of 2011.

The crew has always started about the first to middle of April to be ready for the Southwest fire season and runs until the middle to end of September. They have traveled as far as Alaska, Canada, Minnesota, Florida, and North Carolina and all the western States. They also see a lot of time working with Fire Use here on the Gila.

Superintendents:

George Grijalva	1977-1986
Ricky Sedillo	1986-1988
Kevin Joseph	1988-1992
Mick Guck	1992-1995
Dan Key	1996-1999
John Burfiend	2000-2001
Keith Matthes	2002-2003
Mark Bernal(acting)	2004
Mike Schinstock(detail)	2005
Cathleen Lowe	2006-2010
Pedro "Pete" Valenzuela	2011-Present

Past Logo

